

Tiny Libraries Travel About New York Bearing Pabulum to the Book Hungry



NOON HOUR IN A FACTORY—THE TRAVELLING LIBRARY IN USE.



The TEACHER of the BLIND at BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.



A RURAL CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

Engine Houses, Cigar Factories, Homes—All These and Many Others Draw on "Touring Library's" Storehouse.

steal the littler fellows' tickets, and sometimes they buy and sell them among themselves.

"Our greatest problem at present is to interest the boys and girls over twelve—those who feel themselves too grown up to come to the story hour and are not quite grown up enough to use the adults' reading room with discretion. But a solution has been found that promises to work very well. We are forming 'reading clubs'; you know, the word 'club' has a magic meaning for boys and girls, and they are willing to do anything in its name. Not that they are required to do things they don't want to," she hastened to explain.

"My boys in the twenty different clubs I look after have always the privilege of choosing their own topics to read about. In one club we have just finished railroad stories and are going on to adventure stories of the West. For the railroad stories, of course, did a little 'serious' reading for a background—about engines and transportation. With the Western stories we shall have some of the historical adventures of men like Clark, who helped open up the great Northwest. In one of the clubs we are reading humorous stories, and if you could see those boys enjoy Mark Twain," she added enthusiastically, "you would see that this work more than pays for itself."

"The normal boy has to have 'thrillers,' too, and we give them to him. Once get a boy to see that Poe's 'Purloined Letter' is the greatest detective story ever written and you have opened up a world to him in which the penny dreadfuls on the newsstand around the corner no longer have a being. Boys crave exciting stories, and I believe in giving them what they want. They are bound to satisfy their appetite in some way, and it may as well be with material of the best quality. Let them have all they want of 'The Sign of the Cross,' 'The Study in Scarlet' and 'The Black Cat.'"

Miss Tyler finds that the girls must have more than a rattling good story to hold their interest.

"They want style, too," she said. "With the boys it does not seem to matter whether a story is beautifully told, so long as it is interesting. The girls, however, have a keener feeling for rhythm. Another thing about girls is that they seem to require the stimulation of taking part in order to become thoroughly interested. They like to read aloud, and especially to read plays."

Well Chosen Tones, Properly Cased, Carry Pleasure and Profit from Central Library to Thousands of Readers.

THERE is no excuse for any one in this vast city, wherever he may be, however busy or far from a library, or even if he be blind, to go book-hungry while the public library is in existence. The library does not limit its work to the buildings where its books are housed—it goes out into the highways and byways and takes books with it. Every one knows, of course, that the great marble central building at Fifth Avenue and 42d Street offers its treasures to the public every day from 9 o'clock in the morning until 10 in the evening, and that the forty branch libraries in various parts of the city are open from 9 a. m. until 9 p. m., but how many stop to think of the firemen on duty, the policemen in precinct houses, the men in construction camps about the city, in factories, on ships in the navy yard and out at sea, and the blind at Blackwell's Island, and wonder how they get books? Many of these men are on duty while the libraries are open, and others are a weary distance from any branch. But they do get books, and just the books they want, too—and thereby hangs our tale.

On the basement floor of the library, off in a corner of the building, back of the maze of steel stacks, is a special library of which few persons suspect the existence. It is called the "travelling library," and is occupied by a busy force of assistants directed by Miss A. E. Brown, who probably knows more about the book-hungry people in odd corners of this city than any other one person.

When seen by the Tribune reporter Miss Brown was making up a list of one hundred books to be sent to a cigar factory that had just asked for a travelling library. "We are sending them two-thirds fiction," she said in reply to a question, "some good travel and—er—some philosophy."

When the reporter wondered at the sending of philosophy to a cigar factory Miss Brown said, in a matter-of-fact way: "Oh, yes, they are mostly foreigners, and they are serious readers—foreign people. They take all the philosophy we send them and ask for more. There is a club of Russians on the lower East Side that we supply with a travelling library, and, judging from the books they select, they must be among the best read men in the city. There are few American business men, I am sure, that have read a fraction of the books that those workers read. It is an interesting biological problem," she continued, contemplatively, "their bodies seem to be so worn out, and yet their minds remain fresh."

These books selected by Miss Brown for the cigar factory will be sent to them in one of the library's electric wagons, and will be placed in the hands of some responsible person in the factory. When the books have circulated and it is time to send a new batch, the person in charge may make out a list from the catalogue of the travelling library, and whatever books are desired will be sent.

EVERY ENGINE HOUSE A LIBRARY.

"We send these little travelling libraries to all the engine houses in Manhattan, The Bronx and Richmond," said Miss Brown, "and we always endeavor to include in them books that will be of practical assistance to the men, such as the new civil service manuals, books on engineering, etc., but—with a sympathetic twinkle in her eye—"we don't neglect the fiction."

Here is a list of the books that are going to one of the police precincts. Look it over and judge for yourself whether or not the "Finesse," besides being a goodly body of men to look upon, are not also in a fair way to win out in the line of culture:

Allen, "Efficient Democracy."
Wood, "Primer of Political Economy."
Abenschein, "Secret of the Old Masters."
Ball, "Chimes at Home."
Griffith, "Romance of Discovery."
Lipp, "How to Prepare for Civil Service Examination."
Steffens, "Struggle for Self-Government."
Farrie, "Little Minister."
Churchill, "Coniston."
Davis, "Captain Macklin."
Hart, "Trail of the Lonesome Pine."
Hart, "Lack of Roaring Camp."
Hawthorne, "Twice Told Tales."
Kipling, "Soldiers Three."
Lincoln, "Capt. Warren's Wards."
Norris, "Octopus."
Page, "Under the Crust."
Parker, "Weavers."
Shel, "Part of Fire."
Smith, "Wood Firs in No. 2."

"We work hand in hand with the schools, too," said Miss Brown, "and send them special little reference libraries. Some of the teachers, especially in the English and history classes, like to get a travelling library containing all the books of reference they want their pupils to use during the term."

"But one of the most important aspects of our work in this line is the growth of the library stations established at eleven industrial schools in the poorest parts of the city. Although the youngsters there are absorbed in the more serious side of life, trying to learn a trade, we find that they are just as interested in story books as their more fortunate brothers and sisters in other parts of the city. Of course we keep in these schools, too, a large selection of books that are not textbooks, but that are interesting supplementary reading in connection with the school work."

"Then there are our home libraries," she continued, waxing enthusiastic; "they are among the most interesting of our activities. We have little wooden cases which will hold ten books each, and these are sent into homes wherever they are asked for. Some one in the home is responsible for them, and a little circle is formed of friends or of people in the same house that

want to read the books. The only thing we ask of them is that they keep a record of the number of times a book has circulated. "The people in the lower part of the city, near South Ferry, where there are no convenient branch libraries, are particularly interested in the home libraries—they hear about them from friends or from the teachers in the playgrounds."

"There is one family that we have been supplying with one of these little libraries for years. They are very poor and are always being dispossessed. We have to send the box to a different address almost every three months, yet those people have never lost a book."

"Another of our older friends is a dressmaker, who circulates the books among her apprentices."

"All the persons to whom our home libraries go are very appreciative, and some put the books to noble uses. There is one family we know of; the oldest girl is sixteen years of age and there are five younger children in the family. The mother died three years ago, and that older girl has struggled bravely to keep the family together. One of her strongest aids, she tells us, is the little box of books we send her, with picture books for the littler ones and bright stories for the older ones."

"Oh, yes," in reply to a question, "it is absolutely free. We send the books by messenger or by express, and they are returned in the same way."

"But you must not think that these home libraries go only to the very poor. We have on our list a retired college professor, several well-known clubwomen and leaders of debating clubs. You see, waving her hand about the room, "we have all the best of the older and newer books on sociological and educational problems and scientific management." And, sure enough, all about Miss Brown's desk were stacked books containing the history of and attempts to solve all the vital problems of the day."

To the question of whether the larger travelling libraries were sent only to schools and city departments, Miss Brown answered with a smile and rattled off the names of a number of places that receive these libraries. Of them the reporter caught "seventeen business establishments, including shirtwaist factories and department stores, two insurance companies, troops of Boy Scouts, seven stations and construction camps of the board of water supply, thirty-six study clubs in various parts of the city, seventeen Sunday schools, several branches of the Young Men's and the Young Women's Christian Associations, five American District Telegraph offices, and so on, almost ad infinitum."

MILLION A YEAR CIRCULATION.

"Our circulation for a year goes over the million mark," added Miss Brown.

The travelling library office also has charge of the distribution of worn books taken from the shelves of the branches. These are sent to places where, for one reason or another, travelling libraries cannot be sent—to prisons, hospitals, reform schools, the revenue cutter service, New York Port Society and the Brooklyn navy yard.

When asked whether the persons to whom the books go really care about having them and appreciate the library's efforts to send them supplied with suitable reading material, Miss Brown drew a formidable pile of letters from a drawer in her desk. One of them, from the manager of one of the messenger stations, reads as follows:

"Dear Miss Brown: I have received the twenty-five books sent by you for distribution among the messengers of the district, and I don't think too much praise can be tendered you for your kind and thoughtful act toward the boys. I will see that they are distributed faithfully, and will also see that exchanges are made between the boys, so that all will have an equal chance to profit by your generous act."

In the name of the messengers of the district I thank you.

And the proprietor of a lodging house on

the Bowery in writing to Miss Brown to thank her for her books and to tell her how greatly his "guests" had enjoyed them asked that the next time books were sent would she please include more poetry and literature. "I have reason to believe that that man was really sincere," said Miss Brown. Which suggests a whole story in itself.

Uncle Sam and the city unite to keep the blind supplied with reading material. Although there is a reading room for them in the central library, it is little used by the blind themselves, as many of them are naturally sensitive about reading in public, and many of them have great difficulty in getting about. Much of the work of this department, therefore, is done outside the library. To facilitate matters, the Post-office carries all books for the blind to and from the library without charge. Books from New York are sent not only about the city, but also to New Jersey and Connecticut, as well as to other parts of New York State.

THE BLIND TAUGHT TO READ.

"We also employ a teacher," explained Miss Goldthwaite, who has charge of this department. "She goes about among the adult blind wherever her services are requested and teaches them to read. Last year she made over 450 visits. She also sends one day each week on Blackwell's Island teaching the blind there and changing their books."

"How do people know about this teacher?" Miss Goldthwaite was asked.

"Oh, we print all our notices in 'Ziegler's Magazine,' 'Ziegler's Magazine.' It is a magazine for the blind and is published at the expense of Mrs. Ziegler and sent free to the blind all over the country. It is of course the ideal medium for all our announcements of new books and other notices."

"The announcement of a new book is always an event to our public," she continued. "People are just beginning to realize that the blind are as human as the rest of us and have very much the same emotions and like to read the same books. Why, but a short time ago, the only books published for the blind were religious tracts, and here—picking up a slip of paper marked with mysterious dots—"some one writes for 'Mollie-Make-Believe' and 'Mrs. Wiggins of the Cablage Patch.' We can fill that request, too," she beamed.

"It may surprise you to know," she continued, "that we circulated more music from this department than any one of the branch libraries. We also send games like dominoes, cards, parliaments and checkers about the city."

"Then we circulate about twenty-five magazines, most of them in English, of course, but we have three German ones that have a very big circulation, and one French one, and even one in Esperanto. This has been one of our most popular magazines this month," she said, picking up an English magazine containing an elab-

orate description of the London tubes with maps. "Maps are always popular."

"A great deal of our outside work is done in connection with the schools. The library in all departments is growing to work more and more in co-operation with the schools. We lend them books of reference and books for supplementary reading, and we help many college students with our copies of Virgil, Shakespeare and other classics."

The library for the blind owns, at present, 17,136 volumes, including books of fiction, history, travel and philosophy.

One of the most sympathetic of the out-of-the-ordinary activities of the library is the special work done with children.

"Every one realizes," said Miss Anna Tyler, who has charge of this special work, "that children's librarians must be care-

fully chosen and must be particularly well suited to their work in order to be able to give sympathetic advice and to direct tactfully the reading of the small boys and girls, but we on the inside realize that even more must be done to help the children to get the full value of the library and to stimulate their interest in the best books."

"Our chief means to this end is the story hour. At the beginning of each year we ask those librarians who are willing to tell stories to volunteer. Of course, we cannot require story telling as a part of the regular work of the librarian, because many of our girls, while admirable librarians, just cannot tell stories, so, you see, we have to make the work voluntary."

"The first part of the year the story hour each week is devoted to the littler children

For the boys and girls a little older we use the great hero stories, and stories, for instance, like the Nibelungen Ring. And sometimes the stories are about exhibits loaned by the American Museum of Natural History."

"You've no idea how difficult it is to wean the boys and girls from fairy stories. Even when they have grown so much older that they have to make room for younger ones in the fairy tale group, they will hang around on the edge of the circle, listening with open mouth and saucer eyes."

"In some parts of the city, where we have a circulation in the children's library of from 700 to 1,500 books a day, we have to give the children tickets for the story hour to avoid overcrowding the room. It is a system that has its disadvantages, however, because sometimes the larger boys

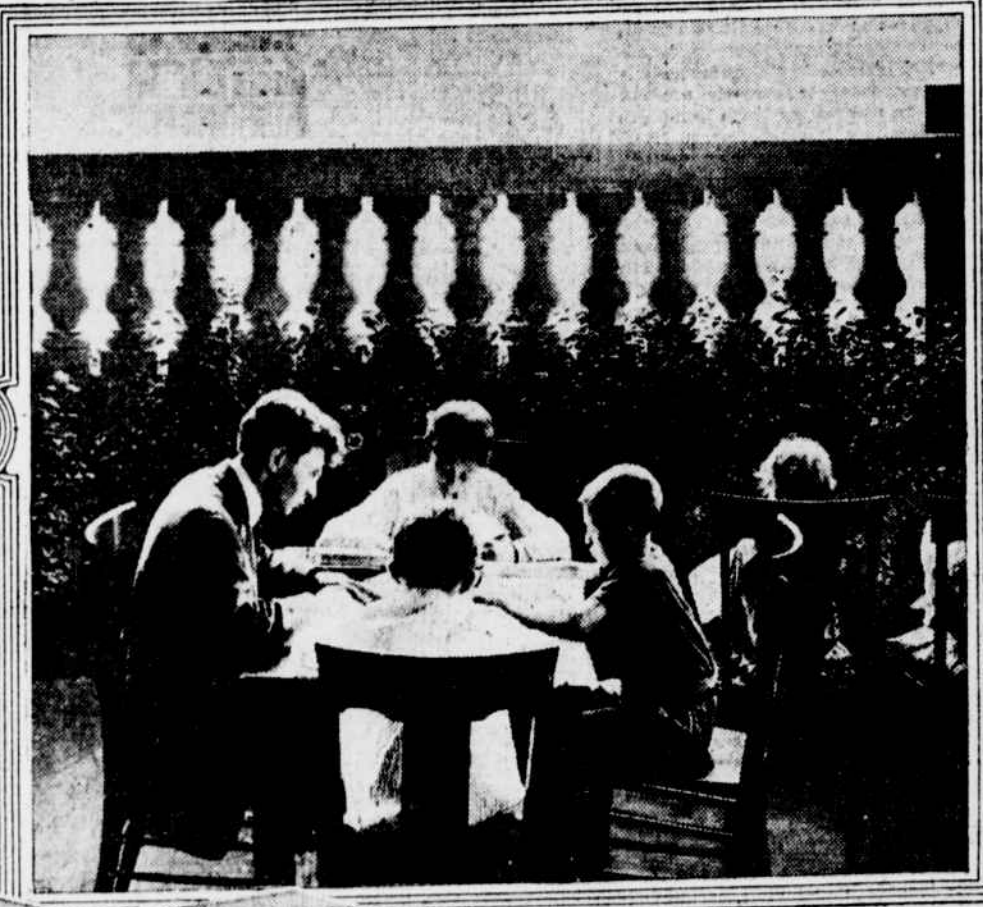
"One of my girls' clubs is the 'Shakespeare Club.' It is very interesting, that club. I have been trying to read modern plays with them and find that although they enjoyed 'The Bluebird' and 'Cyrano de Bergerac,' they remained true in their allegiance to Shakespeare. We just finished 'Cyrano' the other day and I asked the girls what they would like to read next. Imagine my surprise when they all chimed, 'Oh, Miss Tyler, let's read 'Macbeth.'"

"Our work with the schools is becoming more important," went on Miss Tyler. "Whole classes are brought from some schools to the library for the story hour, as a part of their work in English, and teachers bring their pupils to our reference

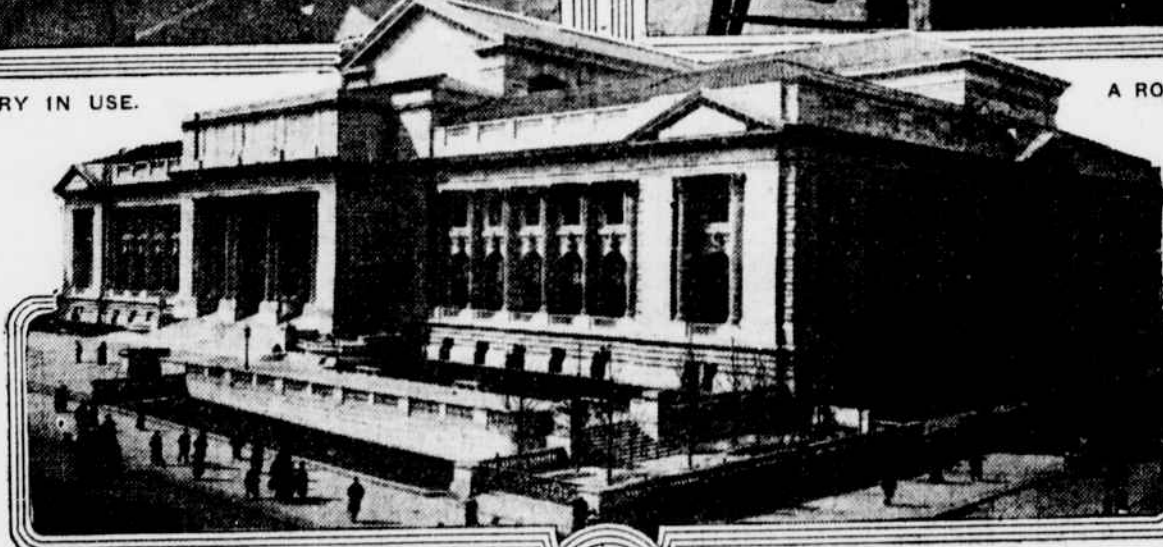
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"ONCE UPON A TIME"—THE STORY HOUR.